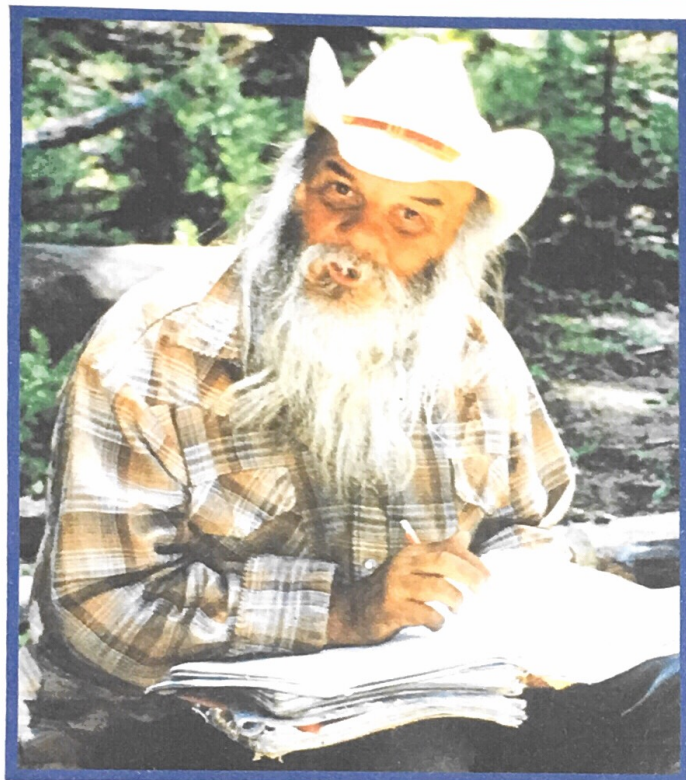




Rainbow Family

Life Stories



*by Jodey Bateman.
Interviews with Rainbow
Family of Living Light
folks conducted between
1977 and 2008.*

Scanned in 2018.

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09.D

MOSES - "A First Class Tramp"

- He was one of the many
"road kids" during the Depression

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[09.D]

MOSES A First Class Tramp

[He has his name because of his long gray beard. Moses puts the street people/roadie culture of today in perspective, since he was one of many "road kids" during the Depression and was also around the beginnings of the present counter-culture in the early Sixties. Although he didn't consider himself an STP'er, he knew the founders of STP.]

MOSES -

I was born in 1925 in Sinaloa, Mexico. My father was German and my mother was Spanish. My old man was doing something in Mexico about dredging harbors for an American company. I came back to the United States when I was six - to Lakewood in the Long Beach, California, area before it was even a town, back when it was strawberry patches.

We had a hard time in the Depression. I can remember macaroni - period and nothing to put on it for days at a time. Or hot dogs and all that trash food. My mother was quite incompetent in some ways. She quit all the home ways of preparing food and started cooking American. The American way you waste the purchase value of the food.

My father died at the table when I was nine - I'll never forget it. He was happy one minute, then bam - he was gone. He had been perfectly healthy. My mother married a Jewish dude. There was nothing for me at home. There was a lot of kids tramping the streets then. I just joined them and went on a tramp with them when I was 14.

There wasn't so much surplus then. They wasn't throwing so much stuff out as nowadays. You had to go to a soup line or ask at people's homes. It wasn't easy then. Now food's the least of my worries. If you're a tramp now, you don't have to carry food with you. There wasn't jobs then. Anything you did was slave labor. I was in trouble all the time. People ask how many times have I been in jail - well, how many hairs on a cat?

I never have gone to a mission except when I was really anxious to take a bath or something like that. I never have took a nose dive [faked conversion] at a mission. Poor old Jesus, the missions have hung a lot of crimes on him that he never did, saying that you're going to burn in hell for doing something that ain't no harm.

I was breaking horses during the War [World War II] at the race track and screwed my knee, so I didn't go to the Army. Race tracks sounded like a good business cause that was where the dope was - mostly speed to geeze up them horses. I did my first hit of speed in a horse stall with a big old horse needle - amphetamine bisulphate, back when it first come out. The race track people had a lot of weed back then. They was raising big fields of it in Kentucky for rope for the war.

I went to Kentucky cause that's where all the breeding farms was. There wasn't many thoroughbreds in the West. I went with the horses all the way from Kentucky to Maine and Vermont in the summer. They just had bush league meetings in that country, no big tracks. Mostly trotting horses in that country. That was closer to the English settlements and they still maintained the English tradition. Then to New Orleans and Florida for the winter.

I run with Barnum and Bailey Circus for a while. I always had a knack for working my way into them things. I guess because they thought I was so stupid and loose-headed, they started taking me in carnivals and things like that when I was a kid. I was a trick rider for a while in a clown act on a mule. I rode with old Johnny Rivers. He had all them clown acts. I had to fuck up all them riding acts for a clown act. You try to mimic the dudes who are doing all the serious trick rides. If you can just hang on to a mule...

I got married and had a bunch of kids, five boys and a girl, and they're all tramps too. I lived outside of Dallas in Richardson, Texas. I didn't stay there much, I was always on the road.

All my kids freaked out in school. I had the phone ringing all the time with the teachers telling me why they was sending them home. They didn't want kids wearing Levi pants to school back then. Or they didn't like my kids stopping on the way back from school to eat at restaurants they considered unsavory. So I told my kids, "Fuck it! Eat wherever you like!"

In 1961 I was dealing dope and it was necessary to go to New York a lot. I stayed in the same building at 10th and Avenue C with Allen Ginsberg and walked around a lot with Bobby Dylan. He hadn't made any records yet.

I went on fishing boats and made connections in Mexico to smuggle pot in 1962. Then I went on a red snapper fishing boat doing the navigation. They didn't know I was smuggling weed. I stole the LORAN co-ordinates off every other boat I was on, so every place I took the red snapper boat, there was a lot of fish.

At night off Progreso, Mexico, I'd just radio and the Mexican boat would come out to meet me with the weed, and I'd paddle out on a raft to get it. I would be attached to my boat by snapper cord-rope you use to catch red snapper. I'd paddle out to the Mexican boat—stay there an hour or two—bullshit, drink a little tequila, maybe smoke some of the weed. I'd pull my way back to our boat—reel my way back in, holding onto the snapper cord. The weed was nothing but tops, all loose. There was five layers of plastic on it and it was on ice in the ice box.

Then we went to Florida. I brought the dope up on the deck and I was sleeping on top of it when I got arrested. I got snitched by this guy because I got his job when he got three ribs broke when he tried to put the antenna back up in a storm. We fed him canned heat, got him drunk, while we waited for the helicopter to come pick him up. He was the first mate, an old-timey fisherman. He couldn't read LORAN readings, so I was doing most of the navigating anyway. In Florida he come back to the boat hoping to get

his job back and he seen me with the pot.

In court I got a nickel and did three years, six months and nine days. After I got out of prison, I called a friend in New York and he said "Wow, where are you?" and he come down with some stolen credit cards and we made a grand tour of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. We all wound up in New York and tried acid in the Mighty Quinn year-1968. That's when Bishop and John and all them folks in STP had the Free Store on Seventh Street. It was down the block a ways from the Liberty House where Abbie Hoffman was. The Free Store was a place to communicate - free clothes and a free place to crash. That's where the STP were all crashing. John had a laboratory in a basement where he made STP. STP is wicked stuff. It'll keep you up for about three days. Owsley was making most of the acid then. MDA Brill was the chemist making MDA for the MDA Family.

The Free Store paid their rent to get in the building. Then the building got condemned and they stopped paying rent. The pigs kicked them out but they kept coming back anyway. Then the STP and MDA Families all went out to Boulder. It beats the shit out of me why. I guess it's a college town and so many places to hide out in the mountains and set up laboratories.

STP John was killed in the back door of a boarding house in Boulder. There was a redneck party going on and he went up and knocked on the door. John was stoned. He insisted that his friend was there and they shot him. Cold blooded murder. John wasn't violent. City people [like John's killers] never touch the earth. Their feet are always walking on pavement, so what do you expect of them?

(I moved to Texas in 1969 because that's where my old lady's fortune was. Her father was a justice of the Texas Supreme Court. He wanted her to make a choice between him and me. He was going to cut her off from all his property. The Texas Department of

Public Safety couldn't catch me selling dope, so they just beat the shit out of me and planted it on me. My father-in-law pushed for my conviction. The narks wanted to put me away for life. I was sentenced to four years and served two years, two months.

Prison's a bad place. If I didn't play the crazy old man, I might have never gotten out the second time. I seen men killed and stabbed.

Prison will make you strong. I see a whole lot of people outside complain, but what they got ain't half so bad. I won't tell no lie - I was scared. But you don't show it. They try to scare kids with knives and shanks and they make punks out of them. If them kids wouldn't show fear and back down - the men with the knives wasn't serious. They was just going to see if they wouldn't back down. But when they do back down, I seen so many rapes and gang bangs.

The second time I got out of prison, I tried to find my old lady and couldn't. They just whisked her and my kids from me. There was a lot of secrecy about it. I split from Texas. If you were to offer me a plane ticket from here to Florida and I had to cross the state of Texas, I wouldn't take it. I'm terrified of that state. So I went to Louisiana and got a job offshore drilling.

After the second time I got busted, I wouldn't touch 100 pounds of any kind of dope as a gift. I don't even want to be around where commercial dope dealing is being done. I've been around a lot of situations since then where dope changed hands, but they weren't dealing. They was friends.

I don't remember how I heard of the Rainbow Gathering at Granby. I heard the White Buffalo would be there and I wanted to see him. I took a freight train up to Colorado for the gathering. The National Guard stopped me, so I just walked across country.

The Granby Gathering, sure it was impressive. Any time you get together with people, it makes an impression on me. After that, I didn't stay in touch with the Rainbow Family - just

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scattered meetings. I know how to get in touch with a lot of people like the Rainbow Family, but why bother? I've always been in touch with one family or another, like the Sunshine Family. I've known where to find them. I've been a first class tramp since then—always travel by freight. I have to take a couple of days to figure out the sequence of the places I traveled. I was in jail—I forget why—when the second gathering happened in Wyoming.

I knew I had to come to the Rainbow Gathering in Oregon this year because I know it's coming to its peak. Something big is going to happen to all of us. I'm going on the Rainbow Caravan this year. That would be the sensible thing to do. We'll entertain like a medicine show. If we make any money, it'll just be to pay expenses. We won't make any for ourselves. I intend to dedicate myself completely to the Rainbow Family from this point on. There's nothing else that I can do. I've done everything else and it didn't work. It didn't make any sense. I intend to spend the rest of my life with the Family.

[After the 1978 Gathering, Moses went to the Rainbow Peace Camp at Ashland, Oregon. He followed the Peace Camp to Clifton, Arizona, then to the California desert near Yuma until the camp dissolved in February, 1979.]